

Message Text

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SUBJECT: NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

REF: STATE 202352

1. SUMMARY. APPARENT IMPORTANCE OF RECENT UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS ATTENDED BY LEADING TRADE UNIONISTS IS THAT IT PROVIDES INDEX OF CURRENT LABOR MOVEMENT COMPLAINTS AGAINST GOVERNMENT. CONFERENCE ALSO SHOWS THAT MANEUVERINGS BETWEEN UNIONS AND GOVERNMENT CONTINUE. IN ORDER GAIN POSITIVE GOVERNMENT SUPPORT, UNION LEADERS APPEAR WILLING TO SACRIFICE TIES WITH FOREIGN LABOR ORGANIZATIONS. END SUMMARY.

2. NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS WAS HELD AT UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN AUGUST 1 THROUGH 7 UNDER AUSPICES UNIVERSITY'S DEPARTMENT OF ADULT EDUCATION. SIMILAR GET-TOGETHER HELD LAST YEAR. CONFERENCE WAS ATTENDED BY ROUGHLY 200 PEOPLE, PRIMARILY TRADE UNIONISTS, STUDENTS AND ACADEMICIANS, A SCATTERING OF EMPLOYER REPRESENTATIVES AND A HANDFUL OF MIDDLE-RANKING LABOR MINISTRY OFFICIALS.

3. CONFERENCE COMMUNIQUE CONTAINED RESOLUTIONS WHICH:
(A) URGED FMG TO SET UP CODE OF CONDUCT FOR LABOR LEADERS AND TO PURGE TRADE UNION OFFICIALS FOUND TO BE "BAD EGGS" BY PROBE
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TRIBUNAL; (B) ASKED GOVERNMENT TO REVIEW DECREES NOS. 23 (MAY

ANTI-STRIKE EDICT--SEE LAGOS 6207) AND 7 (DISPUTE SETTLEMENT ORDINANCE--LAGOS A-52) WHICH, PARTICIPANTS COMPLAINED, MARKEDLY FAVORS EMPLOYERS OVER LABOR; (C) RECOMMENDED THAT DIALOGUE AMONG LABOR, MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNMENT BE MADE A REGULAR FEATURE OF THE COUNTRY'S INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS SCENE; AND (D) CALLED FOR UNIONS TO INVEST PART OF THEIR CHECK-OFF FUNDS IN STOCKS AND SHARES OF INDIGENIZED BUSINESSES AND FOR EMPLOYERS GENERALLY TO ENCOURAGE UNIONS AND INDIVIDUAL EMPLOYEES TO INVEST IN THEIR FIRMS.

4. WE UNDERSTAND PARTICIPATION IN CONFERENCE WAS BY INDIVIDUAL INVITATION FROM UNIVERSITY; THERE WERE NO DELEGATIONS REPRESENTING THEIR RESPECTIVE SECTORS AS SUCH. TRADE UNIONISTS MOST NOTICEABLY ACTIVE AT CONFERENCE WERE OLD-LINE OFFICIALS OF NOW TECHNICALLY DEFUNCT UNITED LABOUR CONGRESS (SECRETARY FORMER WESTERN STATE ULC KOLA BALOGUN, ASST. SECRETARIES V.M.I. JACK AND J.O. ADEG ESAN), NIGERIAN TRADE UNION CONGRESS (SECGEN S.U. BASSEY, PRESIDENT WAHAB GOODLUCK, HUDSON MOMODU), LABOR UNITY FRONT (PRESIDENT A.A. ISHOLA), NIGERIAN WORKERS COUNCIL (SECGEN J.U. AKPAN), ALL OF WHOM WERE SELECTED LAST FALL FOR HIGH OFFICE IN AS YET UNRECOGNIZED NIGERIAN LABOUR CONGRESS (NLC). CHIEF OBEYEMI PRESUMABLY IN ACCRA FOR OATUU MEETING. THERE APPEARED TO BE NO CHANGE IN ANYONE'S LEADERSHIP FORTUNES.

5. WHILE CONFERENCE SAID TO HAVE WELCOMED CONSTRUCTIVE ASPECTS OF GOVERNMENT'S NEW LABOR POLICY, EYE-WITNESS ACCOUNTS AND FEW WRITTEN MATERIALS WE HAVE RECEIVED SO FAR INDICATE TRADE UNIONISTS AND MANY ACADEMICS MORE CRITICAL THAN LAUDATORY IN SESSIONS LEADING UP TO COMMUNIQUE. WRITTEN REPORT OF ONE COMMITTEE BLAMED GOVERNMENT FOR LACK OF INDUSTRIAL PEACE AND URGED FMG TO PLAY MORE ACTIVE ROLE IN INSURING A MORE EFFECTIVE SYSTEM OF JOINT CONSULTATION AND COLLECTIVE BARGAINING. GOVERNMENT URGED TO SET THE EXAMPLE IN DEALINGS WITH ITS OWN EMPLOYEES. COMMITTEE RECOMMENDED THAT VARIOUS NEW LAWS BE ENACTED (INCLUDING LEGISLATION TO SUPPORT RESTRUCTURING OF LABOR MOVEMENT INTO SMALLER NUMBER OF INDUSTRY-WIDE UNIONS, AND TO MAKE CHECK-OFF OBLIGATORY) AND CALLED ON LABOR MINISTRY TO EXPAND GREATLY ITS SERVICES TO WORKERS (EXTENSION OF WORKER LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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EDUCATION AND RESEARCH FACILITIES, AND DEVELOPMENT OF NATION-WIDE TRADE UNION ADVISORY SERVICE). ANOTHER COMMITTEE WHICH DELIVERED ITS REPORT ORALLY, LAMBASTED GOVERNMENT FOR ANTI-STRIKE DECREE AND, JTO LESS EXTENT CRITICISED DISPUTE SETTLEMENT EDICT. THERE WAS MUCH BEHIND THE SCENES UNHAPPINESS OVER FMG'S FAILURE RECOGNIZE NLC AND ITS ANNOUNCED DECISION (AS YET NOT IMPLIMENTED) TO APPOINT AN INTERIM ADMINSTRATOR BUT THIS DIDI NOT SURFACE FORMALLY. ALSO IN EVIDENCE WERE EXPRESSIONS OF UNEASINESS OVER

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE LABOR MOVEMENT FREEDOM OF GOVERNMENT'S
SPOLICY OF "GUIDED DEMOCRACY."

6. GOVERNMENT BAN ON NIGERIAN UNIONS' FOREIGN CONTACTS
APPARENTLY DID NOT MAKE ITS WAY INTO COMMUNIQUE OR FORMAL
COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS BUT WE UNDERSTAND MATTER WAS SIDELY
DISCUSSED. PRIVATELY, MANY LABOR LEADERS INDICATED THAT WHILE
THEY WANTED TO KEEP THEIR INTERNATIONAL AFFILIATIONS, THEY
BADLY NEED FMG SUPPORT. (IN TACTICAL MOVE TO GAIN DESIRED
RECOGNIZATION OF NLC, LABOR OFFICIALS HAVE RECENTLY DELETED
THAT SECTION OF THEIR
CONSTITUTION WHICH AUTHORIZED AFFILIATIONS WITH NON-
OAU AND ILO BODIES.) AS FOR DIRECT FOREIGN FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE,
PUBLIC POSITION SEEMS TO BE BEST SUMMED UP IN SPEECH KOLA
BALOGUN MADE TO CONFERENCE. HE BLAMED GOVERNMENT FOR NIGERIAN
UNIONS' NEED IN PAST TO ACCEPT FOREIGN AID WHICH CAUSED IDEO--
LOGICAL DIVISIVENESS IN LABOR MOVEMENT. WHILE EFFORTS OF
INTERNATIONAL LABOR ORGANIZATIONS TO MEET NIGERIAN WORKERS
EDUCATIONAL NEEDS WER PRAISEWORTHY, GOVERNMENT, SINCE IT HAD
BANNED CONTACTS WITH INTERNATIONAL BODIES, MUST NOW PICK UP
TAB. (REPORT ON OTHER DEVELOPMENTS WERE SPECIFICALLY PERTINENT
TO AALC TRADE UNION INSTITUTE PROGRAM REPORTED SEPTTEL)

7. EMBASSY IS STILL COLLECTING FULL SET CONFERENCE DOCUMENTS.
(THESE AND FEW NEWS ARTICLES WHICH HAVE APPEARED ON MEETINGS
WILL BE POUCHED.) FROM WHAT WE HAVE SO FAR, HOWEVER, IT DOES
NOT APPEAR CONFERENCE SUPPLEMENTED CALL FOR LABOR LEADER CODE
OF CONDUCT WITH DETAILS AS TO CONTENT. SIMILARLY, WE HAVE NO
EVIDENCE CONFERENCE FOCUSSED PARTICULARLY ON RELATIONS WITH
FOREIGN FIRMS.

8. COMMENT: COMMUNIQUE APPEARS TO BE PUBLIC COVER FOR BASIC-
ALLY CRITICAL NATURE OF CONFERENCE. CALL FOR EMPLOYEES TO
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ENCOURAGE UNION INVESTMENT IN LOCAL BUSINESSES IS NOTHING NEW
AND INDIGENIZATION IS GENERALLY POPULAR TOPIC THESE DAYS.
WHILE MANY TRADE UNIONISTS SINCERELY DESIRE SOME "BAD EGGS"
TO BE THROWN OUT, THEY THINK LIGHTNING SHOULD (AND WILL)
STRIKE ONLY THEIR RIVALS. IN ANY EVENT, GOVERNMENT TRIBUNAL
PROBING TRADE UNIONS (FORMAL HEARINGS JUST FINISHED--SEPTTEL
FOLLOWS), HAS PRESENTED THEM WITH FAIT ACCOMPLI WHICH THEY
MUST MAKE BEST OF. IN SUM, WE SEE CONFERENCE AS IMPORTANT
PRIMARILY IN ITS DEPICTION OF LABOR MOVEMENT'S GRIEVANCES
AGAINST COUNTRY'S PRESENT INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS SYTEM, AND AS
INDICATION THAT MANEUVERINGS BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND UNIONS
CONTINUE.
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